

# TIMES AND TRAILS

People, Projects and Priorities at Environment and Conservation

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## *In Vision*

### **Environment and Conservation employees:**

We have accomplished a great deal this year under Governor Bredesen's leadership. Another balanced budget with no new taxes was passed. Continued investments were made in pre-K and higher education along with smart investments in economic development, infrastructure and conservation. We welcomed the passage of Cover Tennessee, a plan that will help provide affordable, portable health care for small businesses and working Tennesseans. These accomplishments are even more impressive when you think back to where we were just three years ago when Tennessee faced an enormous fiscal crisis.

The Governor's leadership has put Tennessee back on the right track with strong bipartisan cooperation. Today we are growing our economy and creating good paying jobs for Tennesseans with targeted investments in job training and infrastructure. We are also preserving our state's natural heritage and outdoor tradition with the protection of more land and water for hiking, fishing, hunting and family enjoyment. Governor Bredesen has tackled real problems, proposed real solutions and made real progress for all Tennesseans.

As the Governor's leadership has put us back on solid ground, Tennessee is now in a position to make these significant improvements to state employees' compensation in the new fiscal year (FY06-07) that begins July 1:

- ◆ 3% across the board pay raise for all employees
- ◆ \$350 bonus for all employees
- ◆ \$21.1 million set aside to address salary compression issues
- ◆ \$15 million set aside to address classification-compensation adjustments
- ◆ Increase longevity bonus from 25 to 30 years
- ◆ Increase in 401(k) match from \$30 to \$40 per month
- ◆ Fund the state portion of increases for the group health insurance program and Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System rate increases.

I am very pleased this state employee salary improvement package was a result of the recently concluded 104th General Assembly. We will keep you updated on the status and timing of these compensation improvements for state employees.

The preservation of Tennessee's outdoor tradition was another area of emphasis for the Governor and Legislature in the FY06-07 budget, and our department will specifically benefit from the following improvements:

- ◆ \$10 million for the new Tennessee Heritage Conservation Trust Fund. This amount will be added to the \$10 million appropriated for the Trust Fund in the current fiscal year.
- ◆ \$20 million bond issue with proceeds to conserve thousands of acres along the Cumberland Plateau where the Bowater Company is currently divesting more than 300,000 acres. The state will negotiate with Bowater to effectively use these funds to preserve priority lands during this "once in a generation opportunity."



*Commissioner Jim Fyke*

- ◆ \$24 million to fully restore the four traditional State Land Acquisition Funds to support wetlands restoration, farmlands protection and local parks development.
- ◆ \$924,000 to discontinue access fees at all 23 State Parks currently levying an access fee on July 1, 2006. This amount is expected to offset park revenues lost when the access fee program is stopped on July 1.
- ◆ \$350,000 to establish a Tennessee Youth Conservation Corps to promote principles of conservation and environmental management among high school and college age Tennesseans at summer programs in state parks beginning the summer of 2007.
- ◆ \$2 million added to the original proposed budget amount for State Parks Maintenance.
- ◆ \$251,000 to increase State Parks housing allowance (which has not been increased since its inception in 1984).
- ◆ \$4 million to support a biofuel project promoting the production, distribution and use of alternative fuels in Tennessee.
- ◆ \$500,000 to coordinate and deliver publicly supplied drinking water to rural Tennessee.

Tennessee State Parks is budgeted to realize \$15.7 million in new capital improvements at the following locations:

### **Capital Outlays for FY06-07**

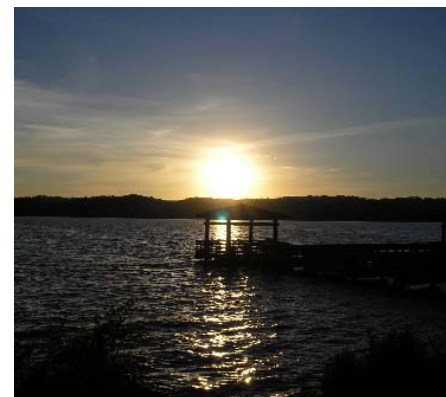
Montgomery Bell – Replace Pro Shop & Restrooms – \$1,835,000  
Cordell Hull Birthplace – Artifact Storage Facility – \$350,000  
New Johnsonville State Park – Welcome Center – \$445,000  
David Crockett State Park – New Cabins – \$2,250,000  
Carter House – New Visitors Center – \$1,250,000 (Tennessee Historical Commission)

### **Capital Maintenance for FY06-07**

Montgomery Bell State Park City Sewer Connection – \$865,000  
Booker T. Washington Group Camp and Lodge Upgrade – \$955,000  
Cumberland Mt. State Park Site/Building Upgrades – \$820,000  
Reelfoot Lake State Park Inn Upgrades – \$885,000  
Dunbar Cave Natural Area Exhibits Renovation – \$250,000  
Radnor Lake Natural Area Exhibits Upgrade – \$260,000  
Sycamore Shoals Historic Park Exhibits Upgrade – \$575,000  
Pickwick Landing State Park ADA Upgrade – \$635,000  
Pickwick Landing State Park Marina Upgrade – \$3,425,000  
Henry Horton State Park Pro Shop Upgrade – \$935,000

This budget and the Governor's environmental agenda are good for Tennessee. Whether it's protecting priority tracts available in the Bowater land liquidation, supporting the innovative new Heritage Conservation Trust Fund or removing access fees at Tennessee State Parks, our state is making significant investments in the quality of life throughout Tennessee.

It is my pleasure to work with Governor Bredesen and the members of the General Assembly. I am proud to lead the Department of Environment and Conservation as we continue to make important progress for Tennessee. All of us working together will ensure an even better quality of life for Tennessee's future generations with cleaner air and water, better-protected land and expanded recreational opportunities. I believe the best is still yet to come, both for our department and the State of Tennessee.



*Booker T. Washington State Park*

## Natural Heritage Changes Name to Division of Natural Areas

The Division of Natural Heritage recently changed its name to the Division of Natural Areas. This change moves the most publicly recognizable part of the division front and center. “The Division is best known by our management of State Natural Areas – the system of 75 designated locations across Tennessee offering more than 108,000 acres of ecologically significant lands for public access, field trips, passive recreation and nature study,” said Division of Natural Areas director Reggie Reeves. “While each program within the division is vital to its mission, the public has its greatest interaction with our Natural Areas Program. Promoting Natural Areas through our name will increase awareness and public support for protecting them.”

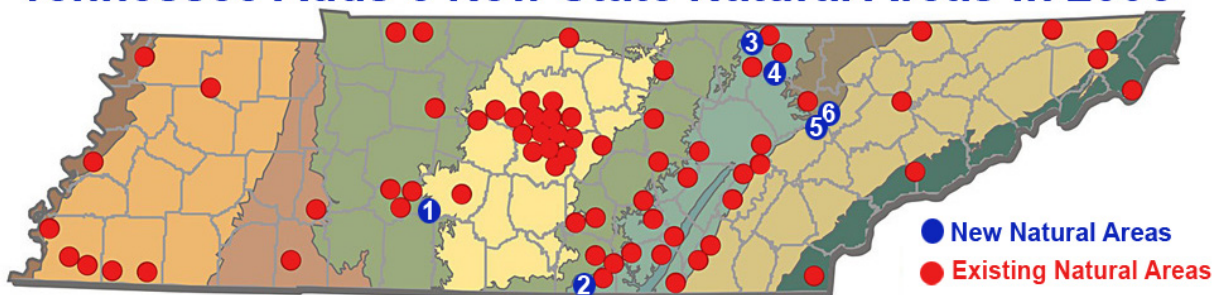
“By changing the division's name to the Division of Natural Areas, people will more readily connect this division with Tennessee's system of natural areas,” said Assistant Commissioner Mike Carlton. “Increased public understanding of the division's work should foster greater support for conservation activities across the state”. This name change will also align the division with the enabling legislation from the Tennessee Natural Areas Preservation Act of 1971, which calls for the establishment of a program to implement the Act. This clear association between the division and the Act underscores the division's historic ties to original and ongoing legislative intent.

Though the division's name has changed, its primary functions and staffing remain the same. Each of the three programs within the division: Natural Areas and Scenic Rivers Program, Natural Heritage Inventory Program and the Rare Species Protection Program are important parts of the whole group. All three programs contribute significantly to the division's ability to accomplish its mission, which is to restore and protect the natural biological diversity of Tennessee.



*Burgess Falls State Natural Area*

## Tennessee Adds 6 New State Natural Areas in 2006



On May 4 Governor Bredesen added six new State Natural Areas (SNAs) for Tennessee as he signed the Administration's State Natural Areas bill into law. The department is now responsible for managing 75 State Natural Areas representing a total acreage of 108,387. New State Natural Areas for 2006 include:

- 1 Stillhouse Hollow Falls:** 90 acres in Maury County. A partnership with Tennessee State Parks and Greenways Foundation and Maury County government.
- 2 Walls of Jericho:** Approximately 750 acres in Franklin County. A partnership with The Nature Conservancy and Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency.
- 3 Pogue Creek:** Approximately 3,000 acres in Fentress County. A partnership with The Nature Conservancy, Division of Forestry and Tennessee State Parks
- 4 Rugby:** 323 acres in Morgan County. A partnership with Historic Rugby using federal Land Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) resources.
- 5 Crowder Cemetary Barrens:** 15 acres in Roane County through an easement with a local landowner.
- 6 Campbell Bend Barrens:** 35 acres in Roane County through an easement with a local landowner.



### National Trails Day Celebrated at Stillhouse Hollow Falls State Natural Area

The department offered a range of activities for National Trails Day on Saturday, June 3. Volunteers and Division of Natural Areas staff prepared a summer field camp at Hampton Creek Cove State Natural Area in Carter County, closed illegal trails at North Chickamauga Creek Gorge State Natural Area in Hamilton County and hiked to Virgin Falls State Natural area in White County.

A featured event was the ribbon cutting and grand opening at Stillhouse Hollow Falls State Natural Area (SNA) in the southern part of Maury County along U.S. Highway 43. Stillhouse Hollow Falls SNA was one of six new State Natural Areas recently established by the General Assembly and is a 90-acre site named for its most significant feature, a 75-foot waterfall, which can be seen by walking approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile along the trail. The property was purchased in 2005 by the Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation and is in the process of being transferred to state ownership. Parking area improvements and the hiking trail were funded by the Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation and installed by the Maury County Parks Department. The Columbia-Franklin chapter of the Tennessee Trails Association was an instrumental partner in cutting the trail to the falls.

"We are able to do more for conservation in Tennessee when state and local governments work together with private partners toward a common goal," said Environment and Conservation Commissioner Jim Fyke. "Establishing Stillhouse Hollow Falls as a state natural area is a good example of effective public-private partnerships protecting unique natural resources and keeping special places accessible to Tennesseans."

Ribbon cutting attendees included several local and state officials, including State Sen. Bill Ketron and State Rep. Tim Dubois. Division of Natural Areas director Reggie Reeves served as master of ceremonies and Assistant Commissioner Mike Carlton shared remarks about his experience as head ranger at Radnor Lake State Natural Area and the importance of community support to move conservation efforts forward. More than 100 guests enjoyed the beautiful weather and took advantage of the sunny day to hike the trail down to the falls.



*Stillhouse Hollow Falls. Photo courtesy of Alan Leiserson.*



*Tennessee Parks and Greenways Foundation President Kathleen Williams and Assistant Commissioner Mike Carlton.*



*(l-r) Alan Leiserson, Office of General Counsel, Reggie Reeves, Division of Natural Areas, and Dr. David Hill, State Parks' All Taxa Biological Inventory coordinator at Stillhouse Hollow Falls SNA.*



*West Tennessee Natural Areas Stewardship Ecologist Chad Harden provides 35th Anniversary State Natural Areas posters to guests at Stillhouse Hollow Falls SNA ribbon cutting.*